

SINGLE STREAM RECYCLING FAQ

Q. Why can we no longer recycle plastic containers that are #4, #5, and #7?

A. This is the most significant change to what we now recycle. The recycling of these particular plastic containers was largely dependent on markets outside the USA. However, in 2018, China, who received most of these plastics implemented a policy known as the National Sword. This resulted in greater restrictions on importation of recyclables of any kind. Markets for #4, #5, and #7 plastics are now almost non-existent. As a result, these items are in many cases leaving the recycling facility as trash and being landfilled. Additionally, these plastics tend to contribute to more food waste contamination in the "Single Stream" mix, resulting in a poorer quality of cardboard and paper being marketed for recycling. We are therefore asking residents to place these containers in their trash receptacle. It should be noted that this change is being implemented not just here in Elk Township, but in municipalities State-wide.

The good news is, there are still strong domestic markets for plastics #1 (soda bottles, water bottles, etc.) and #2 (milk jugs, laundry detergent bottles, etc.), which make up most plastic containers in the waste stream.

Q. How am I supposed to empty and rinse containers like peanut butter, mustard, cheese, and tomato sauce jars?

A. One trick for emptying/cleaning these containers is to fill the mostly empty container with warm water, replace the lid and let soak overnight. In the morning, empty half the water and secure the lid. Shaking the container with the remaining water inside should loosen any food residue inside the container. Empty and rinse the container one final time. It should now be completely empty and ready for your recycling container.

Q. Can I recycle plastic bags in my curbside recycling container?

A. **NO, NO, NO** – You cannot recycle any type of plastic bags in your residential curbside container. Plastic bags are a contaminant in Single Stream residential recycling and are considered the most problematic contaminant found in the curbside recycling mix. Plastic bags interfere with the mechanical recycling process by causing, slow-downs, stoppages and potential damage to recycling processing equipment at the recycling processing facility. **Plastic bags should never be placed in your recycling container.**

Q. So what can I do with plastic bags?

A. Plastic bags by themselves can be recycled. Many supermarkets and big box stores have containers available for customers to recycle plastic bags.

Q. Can plastic wrap or bubble wrap be recycled in my curbside recycling container?

A. NO – Plastic wrap of any kind is not recyclable in the curbside mix, regardless of whether it has recycling labeling on it. All plastic packaging materials should be placed into your trash receptacle.

Q. What do I do with plastic take-out food containers?

A. Plastic food take-out containers are no longer recyclable due to changes in foreign plastic recycling markets. They should be placed in your regular trash. Only plastic bottles and jars which display, #1 or #2 inside chasing arrows on the bottom, of the container are recyclable in your curbside recycling container.

Q. Is there any way to recycle the paper from shredded documents?

A. YES – If you want to recycle your confidential documents, you can bring them to a local or County sponsored shredding event. These events feature shredding trucks that shred the paper on site. The shredded paper generated is then recycled at a facility specifically equipped to handle shredded paper for recycling.

Q. Can I recycle paper packaging in my curbside recycling container?

A. Yes – Paper packaging can be recycled with two exceptions: no foil covered packaging and no plastic/ wax coated paper packaging should be recycled.

* A good rule to follow is if the products paper packaging was purchased off a shelf at the store, it can be recycled in your curbside recycling container. If the products paper packaging came out of the freezer at the store it cannot be recycled and should be placed in your trash receptacle.

Q. Can I recycle pizza boxes in my curbside recycling container?

A. As a rule – NO – pizza boxes should go in the trash. However, if the box is completely clean, with no food or oil residue, it can be recycled in the curbside mix.

Q. Can aerosol cans be recycled in my curbside recycling container?

A. NO – Due to the many varying types of hazardous and non-hazardous liquids that are found in aerosol cans, we recommend placing empty aerosol cans in your trash receptacle. Aerosol cans that contain unwanted hazardous liquids should be taken to a County Household Hazardous Waste drop-off event. 856-478-6045

Q. Can ceramic mugs be placed in my curbside recycling container?

A. NO. These items should be placed in your trash receptacle.

Q. Can I place other glass items such as mirrors or window glass in my curbside recycling container?

A. NO. This glass is a different type of glass than that used to make glass bottles and jars. For this reason, as well as for safety issues, these glass items should be placed in your trash receptacle.

Q. Can I recycle clothing and rags in my curbside recycling container?

A. NO – We recommend donating reusable textiles to an appropriate organization that accepts such items or contact Curb my Clutter at 856-556-3453 to arrange pick up. Rags and unusable textiles should be placed in your trash receptacle.

Q. Can I recycle molded plastic furniture or toys in my curbside recycling container?

A. NO – All rigid plastic furniture and toys should be donated to an appropriate organization or otherwise placed in your regular trash. If the item is too large for your regular trash, bulk item pickup is the Last Friday of the month. Call GME at 856-784-5050 to be placed on the list.

Q. How about the 5-gallon plastic buckets that some paints, pool chemicals, foods, etc. come in? Can these be recycled in my curbside recycling container?

A. NO. These ridged plastic containers should be placed in your trash receptacle.

Q. What can I do with scrap metal from my home?

A. Contact GME 856-784-5050 for bulk pickup on the last Friday of each month.

Q. Can needles be recycled in my curbside recycling container?

A. NO – Residential medical needles must be secured in a rigid container and placed into the regular trash. No medical waste of any type should be placed into your curbside recycling container.

Q. Can I recycle plastic bottles that contained automotive or yard chemicals in my curbside recycling container?

A. NO – Most of these containers contained hazardous chemicals and should be emptied prior to placing them in your regular trash receptacle. Note however that there are a few exceptions to this rule such as, windshield washer fluid and grass seed containers etc... These can be placed in your curbside recycling container.